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8 June 2011

Mr J Toland
Oasis Academy Mayfield
The Grove
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Dear Mr Toland

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Oasis Academy Mayfield

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected the academy on 7 June 2011 and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please thank the students, staff and members of the governing body for helping me with the inspection.

As a result of the inspection on 1 December 2010, the academy was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter. Since the last inspection, one deputy principal has left the academy and the restructuring of the senior leadership team is underway. To strengthen middle leadership, the academy moved to a faculty system in April 2011, appointing new faculty leaders from within.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the academy is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

Students are clear that the academy is improving. They report that behaviour is better, with fewer of their lessons disrupted than in the past. The number of students excluded has reduced markedly. This, students partly attribute to improved continuity in teaching staff, with fewer supply teachers. Improved attendance, reported at the time of the last inspection, has been sustained at just below the national average.

There are good systems and procedures to track the progress of students. The data these provide show that the majority of students are on track to achieve challenging targets. Some students have been entered early for examinations: 34% of Year 11 students have already achieved a grade C or above in English. This is equivalent to the proportion that the previous cohort achieved by the end of their time at the academy. Early entry in mathematics, although only for middle ability groups, has also produced promising achievement. Based on this and the academy's tracking,

data shows that student attainment is expected to be higher than last year and, for the first time, near to the national average. However, there is a legacy of underperformance for some groups of students and, particularly, in Year 9. Generally, higher ability students are making the most progress.

Teaching is improving because of rigorous and systematic monitoring. The impact of initiatives to identify and share good practice, through coaching and professional development opportunities, can be seen in the improving profile of teaching. The proportion of good or better teaching and learning is increasing, and inadequate lessons are rarer than at the time of the last inspection. Joint observation of lessons conducted with one senior member of staff confirmed that the academy has an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching. However, teaching, although improving steadily, is not strong enough to consistently accelerate learning and enable all students to overcome previous underperformance. The academy is well aware where students are underperforming and actively targets them with intervention work.

The academy's global communication specialism is used effectively to share good practice in assessment. The new faculty leaders carry out fortnightly sweeps of the work of their departments. This combines with regular whole-academy evaluation of teaching and assessment to give senior leaders a very accurate view of provision. The marking policy is appropriate and adapted well by departments for their needs. Tracking of the quality and timeliness of marking over time shows that the consistency of implementation is improving. However, marking scrutiny during the inspection, with senior leaders and discussion with students, shows that there is some remaining inconsistency.

Teachers use a common lesson planning format well to develop appropriate learning activities for students. Assessment data is available to staff but is inconsistently used to plan a range of activities that challenges the full range of abilities. The academy is aware of this and is refining coaching programmes to further improve practice. All students have subject specific targets. However, their awareness of them and the steps they need to take to achieve them varies. Key Stage 4 students are very aware of their targets and most know what they need to do to achieve them. Key Stage 3 students are less aware, saying that it depends on the approach of individual teachers and/or departments. The academy is in the process of piloting a Key Stage 3 student progress booklet to improve younger students' understanding of, and engagement with, their own progress.

More-able students report greater satisfaction with the teaching they receive. In their lessons, particularly in Key Stage 4, they say they are given lots of opportunities to learn from each other and develop their independence. This is helped by very effective peer- and self-assessment in some lessons. For example, in a Year 10 lesson, students were actively involved in peer-assessment of written work followed by working in groups to moderate their views. Because they have practised these skills over time, their assessments are accurate and in line with their teachers'.

Students also showed a very good grasp of how to improve work to reach a higher grade. Middle and lower ability students report less consistency in the quality of teaching they receive when compared with the more able. They say that opportunities to work together in groups are limited and that their lessons are very teacher led. The academy is aware that this is often the case in satisfactory teaching and remains a significant challenge.

The statement of action produced by the academy meets requirements. Progress towards clear milestones is being carefully tracked. The academy has been well supported in its progress by the Oasis education team. Senior staff have been appointed from the Future Leaders programme to bolster leadership capacity. Capacity building has been further assisted by the secondment of a senior leader from another Oasis academy. The academy works closely with the local authority school improvement team and this has boosted performance in technology.

I hope that you have found the inspection helpful in promoting improvement in your academy. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Peter Gale
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in December 2010

- Raise students' achievement by reducing variation in the quality of teaching and learning through:
 - embedding systems for identifying and sharing good practice in teaching and learning across the curriculum
 - fully implementing the recently introduced marking policy
 - ensuring all teachers use assessment information well to plan and deliver lessons that challenge students appropriately and accelerate their progress
 - developing students' independence and capacity to take responsibility for their learning
 - ensuring all students have subject-specific targets that help them to understand how to improve their work.